

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 SP-02 /055 W
-----117059 152135Z /64-62

R 151040Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL STUTTGART
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4223
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH

UNCLAS STUTTGART 0485

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB GW
SUBJ: IG METAL STRIKE IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG
REF: A) BONN 4650 B) STUTTGART 434

1. AS OF MIDNIGHT MARCH 14/15 THE GERMAN METAL WORKERS UNION (IG METALL) ORDERED A SELECTIVE STRIKE AGAINST A VARIETY OF FIRMS IN NORTH-BADEN AND NORTH-WUERTTEMBERG. 65,000 WORKERS IN THE STUTTGART AREA (OUT OF A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF 560,000) ARE ON STRIKE. MAJOR FIRMS SUCH AS DAIMLER-BENZ, PORSCHE, BOSCH AND SEL-ITT ARE SHUT DOWN, AS WELL AS A VARIETY OF SMALLER FIRMS WHO SUPPLY INDUSTRY THROUGHOUT THE FRG, ADDING A NATION-WIDE IMPORT TO THE ACTION. EMPLOYERS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING A RETALIATORY LOCK-OUT, ALTHOUGH NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN TAKEN.

2. IN SPITE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRIKE, THERE HAS BEEN A SURPRISINGLY CALM REACTION AMONG LOCAL EMPLOYERS, WHO HAVE FOR SOME WEEKS BEEN RESIGNED TO THE INEVITABLE.
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THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE STRIKE WILL BE SETTLED THE WEEK AFTER EASTER IN A REASONABLE MANNER. WITH A RELATIVELY PROSPEROUS ECONOMY COMPARED TO OTHER FRG LAENDER, INCREASED WAGES ARE NOT THE MAJOR ISSUE. DAIMLER-BENZ, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH ITS ENTIRE PRODUCTION THROUGH 1980 ALREADY SOLD AND ITS CAPACITY FULLY UTILIZED, COULD EASILY MEET HIGHER WAGE DEMANDS THAN THE 4.6 PERCENT MENTIONED IN REF A.

INSTEAD, IT IS AN INDUSTRY WIDE AGREEMENT TO RESIST NON-WAGE DEMANDS MEANT TO COUNTER RATIONALIZATION THAT HAS STRENGTHENED THE EMPLOYERS DETERMINATION TO SIT THE UNIONS OUT. OUR SOURCES INDICATED AN EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT OFFERING BETWEEN 5 PERCENT AND 6 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE WILL BE THE OUTCOME, WITH THE ADDITIONAL AMOUNT OVER THE PRESENT FINAL 4.6 PERCENT OFFER A TRADE-OFF AGAINST THESE NON-WAGE DEMANDS.

3. THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL FEELING AMONG EMPLOYERS THAT THE EVENTUAL BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AGREEMENT WILL SET THE PATTERN FOR WAGE NEGOTIATIONS IN OTHER LAENDER. BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, WITH THE HEALTHIEST ECONOMY AND THE HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF METAL-WORKING INDUSTRY, HAS, EMPLOYERS BELIEVE, BEEN SELECTED BY IG METALL AS THE TEST-CASE. THEIR ATTITUDE, HOWEVER, IS THAT INSTEAD OF STRENGTHENING IG METALL'S POSITION, THIS TACTIC HAS LENT STRENGTH TO THE EMPLOYERS DETERMINATION TO STAND FAST ON THE RATIONALIZATION ORIENTED ISSUES. WE SUSPECT THEY ARE CORRECT.MILLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINING, METALS, LABOR STRIKES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STUTT00485
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780115-0993
Format: TEL
From: STUTTGART
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780363/aaaacsq.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e9394bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BONN 4650, 78 STUTTGART 434
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3318412
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IG METAL STRIKE IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG
TAGS: ELAB, GE
To: STATE, BONN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e9394bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014